

I. Introduction

A. Purpose of the MTP

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the statement of the ways the metropolitan area plans to invest in the transportation system to the Year 2030. The MTP includes both long- and short-range program strategies and actions that lead to the development of an integrated transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods.

A MTP is a tool for helping people in a metropolitan area determine how their area is growing, which way it is headed, and whether they want it to continue going in that direction. The 2030 MTP analyzes what would happen if current trends were allowed to continue to the year 2030. It shows what would happen if no planning for the future were done, and then proposes an alternative to doing nothing. It outlines specific goals and strategies regarding transportation and offers a set of recommendations aimed at relieving congestion, maintaining air quality, and improving quality of life. These long-term recommendations will guide decisions about specific transportation projects to develop and fund in the short term.

The MPO engaged interested parties in the development of the plan, in accordance with our approved Public Involvement Procedures. Additionally, the MTP will conform with:

- federal planning regulations (Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450);
- the State Implementation Plan (SIP) Revision: Limited Maintenance Plan for Carbon Monoxide (CO) for Albuquerque/Bernalillo County, New Mexico; and
- the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board Transportation Conformity regulations, New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) Title 20, Chapter 11, Part 3.

Pursuant to Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450 (23 CFR 450), the MRCOG, serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), is responsible for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process, including the development, maintenance and updating of the MTP.

B. Federal Requirements and Guidelines

In addition to the usefulness of having a long-range transportation plan, there are federal requirements that state that all metropolitan areas with more than 200,000 inhabitants, such as the greater Albuquerque area, develop a MTP for a twenty-year period and update it every four years. The plan also includes:

- The projected transportation demand of persons and goods.
- Existing and proposed transportation facilities that should function as an integrated transportation system.
- Operational and management strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities.
- Consideration of the results of the congestion management process.

- Assessment of capital investment and other strategies to preserve the existing and projected future infrastructure and provide for multimodal capacity increases based on regional needs and priorities.
- Discussion of potential environmental mitigation activities.
- Pedestrian walkway and bicycle transportation facilities.
- Transportation and transit enhancement activities.
- A financial plan that demonstrates how the adopted plan can be implemented, while operating and maintaining existing facilities and services.

SAFETEA-LU: the latest Federal Transportation Legislation

The latest federal transportation law, the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act-A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)” provides \$286 billion in transportation spending nationally through the year 2009. SAFETEA-LU directs that each State’s and each MPO’s planning process must provide for consideration of transportation projects and strategies that address eight factors:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation; and
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

On February 14, 2007, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) published the final rule for statewide and metropolitan transportation planning in the federal register (Volume 72, Number 30). This final rule revises the regulations governing the development of metropolitan transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas and the regulations for Congestion Management Systems. The revision results from the passage of the SAFETEA-LU law, which also incorporates changes initiated in its predecessor legislation, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and will make the regulations consistent with current statutory requirements.

The regulations, specifically Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 450 (23 CFR 450) and Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations Part 613 (49 CFR 619) outline the requirements for State Departments of Transportation (DOTs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and public transportation operators to conduct the transportation planning processes in metropolitan areas and states.

These regulations set forth the national policy that the MPO designated for each urbanized area—in our case, the Metropolitan Transportation Board—is to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process.

This includes the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that encourage and promote the safe and efficient development, management, and operation of surface transportation systems.

Key changes to the planning regulations under SAFETEA-LU are addressed in this MTP and, in summary, include:

- Promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development strategies.
- Establish safety and security as separate, stand-alone planning factors.
- Encourage the transportation planning process to be consistent with the new Strategic Highway Safety Plan (in New Mexico, this plan is titled the Comprehensive Statewide Transportation Safety Plan, completed in 2006 by the NMDOT).
- A safety element in the MTP.
- In consultation with Federal, State and Tribal wildlife, land management, and regulatory agencies, discuss potential environmental mitigation activities within the MTP.
- Operational and management strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities to relieve congestion and maximize safety and mobility of people and goods.
- Coordinate the Congestion Management Process (CMP) as a key input to the development of the MTP.
- To the maximum extent practicable, the MTP shall be consistent with the development of the regional Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) architectures.
- Consultation with representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, freight shippers and providers of freight transportation services, Indian Tribal governments, and Federal land management agencies.
- Development of a public participation plan with interested parties.
- Promote improved visualization for understanding of transportation plans and programs.
- While not a complete list, some new, revised and a few highlighted definitions from the new regulations and more relevant to the development of an MTP include:
 - *Administrative modification*: means a minor revision to a long-range statewide or metropolitan transportation plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), or Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that includes minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding source of previously-included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. An administrative modification is a revision that does not require public review and comment, redemonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination (in nonattainment and maintenance areas).
 - *Amendment*: means a revision to a long-range statewide or metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, or STIP that involves major change to a project included in a MTP, TIP or STIP, including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope (e.g., changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes). Changes

to projects that are included only for illustrative purposes do not require an amendment. An amendment is a revision that requires public review and comment, redemonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination (for MTPs and TIPs involving “non-exempt” projects in nonattainment and maintenance areas).

- *Environmental mitigation activities*: means strategies, policies, programs, actions, and activities that, over time, will serve to avoid, minimize, or compensate for (by replacing or providing substitute resources) the impacts to or disruption of elements of the human and natural environment associated with the implementation of a long range statewide transportation plan or MTP. The human and natural environment includes, for example, neighborhoods and communities, homes and businesses, cultural resources, parks and recreation areas, wetlands, and water sources, forested and other natural areas, agricultural areas, endangered and threatened species, and the ambient air. The environmental mitigation strategies and activities are intended to be regional in scope, and may not necessarily address potential project-level impacts.
- *Financially constrained or Fiscal constraint*: means that the MTP, TIP and STIP includes sufficient financial information for demonstrating that projects in the MTP, TIP and STIP can be implemented using committed, available, or reasonably available revenue sources, with reasonable assurance that the federally supported transportation system is being adequately operated and maintained. For the TIP and STIP, financial constraint/fiscal constraint applies to each program year. Additionally, projects in nonattainment and maintenance areas can be included in the first two years of the TIP and STIP only if funds are “available” or “committed.”
- *Metropolitan Planning Organization*: means the policy board of an organization created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- *Revision*: means a change to a long-range statewide or metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, or STIP that occurs between scheduled periodic updates. A major revision is an “amendment,” while a minor revision is an “administrative modification.”
- *Update*: means making current a long-range statewide transportation plan, an MTP, TIP, or STIP through a comprehensive review. Updates require public review and comment, a 20-year horizon year for the MTP and statewide transportation plans, a four year program period for TIPs and STIPs, demonstration of fiscal constraint (except for long-range statewide transportation plans), and a conformity determination (for MTPs and TIPs in nonattainment and maintenance areas).

Overview of Metropolitan Transportation Planning

Metropolitan transportation planning provides the information, tools, and public input needed for improving transportation system performance. Transportation planning reflects the community’s vision for its future. It also includes a comprehensive consideration of possible strategies: an evaluation process that encompasses diverse viewpoints; the collaborative participation of relevant transportation-related agencies and organizations; and an open, timely, and meaningful involvement of the public.

Transportation planning requires a comprehensive, holistic look at the needs of the future of the region and its inhabitants. Environment, economy, land use, safety and health, mobility, access, community and neighborhoods, and social equity are important societal issues that are linked to transportation. Decisions about transportation affect our society in many ways and, conversely, many of society's decisions have impacts on our transportation system.

What is the metropolitan transportation planning process?

Transportation planning in metropolitan areas is a collaborative process, led by the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and other key stakeholders in the regional transportation system. In the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA), the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) administratively houses the MPO staff and the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB) decides on transportation plans and programs for the AMPA.

The process is designed to foster involvement by all interested parties, such as the business community, community groups, environmental organizations, and the general public through a proactive public participation process conducted by the MPO in coordination with the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) and transit operators. It is essential to extend public participation to include people who have been traditionally underserved by the transportation system and services in the region.

The planning process includes a number of steps:

- Monitoring existing conditions
- Forecasting future population and employment growth
- Assessing projected land uses in the region and identifying major growth corridors
- Identifying problems and needs and analyzing, through detailed planning studies, various transportation improvements
- Developing alternative capital and operating strategies for people and goods
- Estimating the impact of the transportation system on air quality within the region
- Developing a financial plan that covers operating costs, maintenance of the system, system preservation costs, and new capital investments

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization and its functions?

A metropolitan planning organization (MPO) is a transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities. Federal legislation passed in the early 1970s required the formation of an MPO for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000. MPOs were created to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs were based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (3-C) planning process. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs are channeled through this planning process.

There are several core functions of the MPO in this region:

- **Establish a setting:** establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision-making in the metropolitan area.
- **Evaluate alternatives:** evaluate transportation alternatives, scaled to the size and complexity of the region, to the nature of its transportation issues, and to the realistically available options.
- **Develop a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP):** the UPWP lists the transportation studies and tasks to be performed by the MPO staff or a member agency. The UPWP reflects local priorities and contains several elements, including planning tasks and studies, the agency responsible for each task, and funding sources identified for tasks and studies.
- **Maintain a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP):** develop and update a long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years that fosters (1) mobility and access for people and goods, (2) efficient system performance and preservation, and (3) quality of life.
- **Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** develop a program based on the metropolitan transportation plan and designed to serve the area's goals, using spending, regulating, operating, management, and financial tools.
- **Maintain a Congestion Management Process (CMP):** areas with populations over 200,000 are called transportation management areas (TMAs). The Albuquerque metro area is a TMA and as such must have a congestion management process that identifies actions and strategies to reduce congestion and increase mobility.
- **Conform with Air Quality Plans:** Bernalillo County within our metropolitan area is designated as an air quality limited maintenance area for carbon monoxide. This designation creates additional requirements for transportation planning, especially because most of the carbon monoxide pollution came from automobiles. Transportation plans, programs and projects must conform with the state's air quality plan, known as a State Implementation Plan (SIP).
- **Involve the public:** involve the general public and all the significantly affected sub-groups in the essential functions listed above. The process includes outreach strategies to give people the opportunity to provide input while the plans and programs are being developed.

What is the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA)?

Federal regulations require that the AMPA includes all of Albuquerque's urbanized area, the remainder of Bernalillo County, and areas that are reasonably anticipated to become urbanized over the next 20 years. In the Albuquerque metropolitan area this encompasses:

- The City of Albuquerque, The Village of Tijeras, the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, and the remainder of Bernalillo County;
- The Village of Los Lunas in Valencia County;
- The City of Rio Rancho, the Village of Corrales, the Town of Bernalillo, and Algodones in Southern Sandoval County;
- Five Indian Reservations including portions of Laguna, To'hajilee, Isleta Pueblo, the Pueblo of Sandia and all of Santa Ana Pueblo.

These boundaries are occasionally reviewed and revised as necessary. Therefore, the 2030 MTP applies to a larger AMPA than previous years, and this should be considered when comparing demographics and forecasts with previous transportation plans.

The AMPA is located in north central New Mexico, and is bisected by the Rio Grande two major interstates and a railroad. The mountainous eastern part of the area consists of the Sandia Mountains and the Manzano Mountains to the southeast. To the west, flat mesas stretch out to the Rio Puerco Valley and beyond.

Map I-1. Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area

